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Annual Report of the Medical Officer of  
Health to the Thirsk Rural District Council  
for the Year 1895

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen

In presenting my  
first Annual Report to the Thirsk Rural District  
Council, I am enabled by the courtesy of the  
Medical Officer of Health in charge for a time of  
those townships which have been added to this  
district at different periods during the year, to  
make my remarks include the whole of the  
district for the whole of the year.

Concerning causes likely to affect the health  
of the community during the year, my Report  
I am pleased to say is a good one.

The epidemic wave of Measles and Whooping-  
cough which passed across the district during  
part of 1894, had passed harmlessly and finally  
disappeared before the close of that year, without in  
any perceptible way injuriously affecting the  
general health of the younger portion of the  
population which had been more specially subjected  
to its vicissitude.

The total number of Births registered during  
the year was 352, of which 179 were of Males, and  
173 of Females. This gives an Annual Birthrate  
of 27.04 per thousand of the population.

The total number of Deaths during the year  
was 194, of which 96 were of Males and 98 of  
Females. This constitutes an Annual Deathrate  
of 14.90 per thousand of the population of the  
enlarged district.

31 Cases of Zymotic Disease have been notified







during the Year, to which must be added one case of Scarlatina in Louthorpe, in the first Quarter, before its entry into this district.

Of these 32 Cases 3 have been fatal.

Appended is a Table of the Particular Localities and Diseases Notified

	Scarlatina	Measles	Diphtheria	Typhoid	Croup	Erysipelas	Total
Thirsk	8	2	1	1		1	13
Lowerby	2		1	1		1	5
Balk						1	1
Bayby						1	1
Newsham						1	1
Thirlby			1				1
Thornton-le-Moor	1						1
Sandhutton						1	1
Thirby Wiske	1			1			2
Carlton Miniott	1						1
Eldemire				1			1
Feliskirk						1	1
Sutton				1			1
S. Hilvington					1		1
Louthorpe	1						1
Total	14	2	3	5	1	7	32







The total number of Deaths from Zymotic Disease is 17, given as under.

	Thirsk	Lopeloff	Sutton	Wrayton	Pickhill	Total
Scarlatina	1					1
Typhoid		1	1			2
Diarrhoea	4				1	5
Influenza	3	3	1	1		8
Alcoholism	1					1
Total	9	4	2	1	1	17

This constitutes an Annual Deathrate from Zymotics of 1.30 per thousand of the population.

Taking into consideration the particular factors of this deathrate, we find that from

Influenza, which lingers in some subtle way among the people 8 out of the 17 deaths from Zymotics have resulted.

Diarrhoea. The deaths from this disease are chiefly of very young infants, and presumably from errors in feeding.

Scarlatina. One case in Thirsk had evidently been the result of infection caught while on a visit near Durham. One case was introduced from Northallerton and was sent back to the Fever Hospital there. One case was reported in Thorton-le-Moor. Then the District remained for a time free from the disease, until the advent of the November hirings, when the influx of strangers to the town of Thirsk, with the attendant gathering of shows and other amusements, was followed at once by an outbreak in and near the town.







In dealing with this outbreak, it was found as usual, that in some of the Cottages isolation of the case was impossible, but where possible it was carried out, and a free use of disinfectants with subsequent cleansing was enjoined.

As a consequence no second series of cases resulted in any of the infected houses, and the disease had disappeared before the end of the year.

Measles. Two cases only were reported during the year, in one the infection had evidently been caught during a journey from London, the second case was the result of a journey from Paris.

Diphtheria. Three cases of this disease were reported. One of the cases was that of a Female Teacher who came home ill from Stockton.

The second case a girl came home with the disease upon her, from Bilsdale. The third case, in an adult, occurred in premises attached to Hall's Farm in Thirsk, where the sanitary arrangements both within and without the house were defective. In this instance the drainage defects have been remedied, and new offices erected.

Typhoid. During the year 5 cases of Enteric Fever were notified, with 2 deaths.

One case was introduced from Scarborough to Eldonire. One from Leeds to Thirby Wike.

One case, a farm lad, had gone home ill to Sutton Bank at the November term the origin of the disease not being known.

One case appeared in a cottage on Topcliffe Road where there were no insanitary surroundings, but near the pump, which is a field length from the house there were two pigsties having small







Cesspools attached to them. Examination of the wellwater showed no evidence of special Contamination; only one child in the family was affected in any way. The fifth Case is of some importance as it seems to have been the starting point of a severe local outbreak.

The subject of the attack, a girl of twelve years, was visiting in Northallerton in the early part of September, and while there, her Aunt with whom she was staying, was taken to the Infectious Diseases Hospital suffering from fever.

The girl stayed about a fortnight, and after her return home seems to have become ill about the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, and the case was notified on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November.

The house in which the case occurred is small and crowded. The Town's water supply is in use.

The Sanitary Conveniences available in the yard have been often a cause of complaint to the District Authority. The space at command is glaringly insufficient and the Closets from their proximity to the dwellings being a continual nuisance.

In dealing with this case, the disposal of excreta in the ordinary closets was stopped at once, and space in a convenient field was obtained for the burying of it.

The well in the yard has been closed for a time at least. The yard drains have been carefully flushed and disinfected frequently, as well as being tested for any possible blocking.

This case of infectious disease in a locality so cramped and crowded, and the consequences which have arisen from or been subsequent to it, are a powerful commentary on the necessity







which has so often been advanced for a District Infectious Diseases Hospital with suitable disinfecting apparatus.

Had there been a suitable place to which this Enteric case could have been removed and isolated, a whole train of disasters to health, life, and property, might have been certainly averted.

In the early part of the Year the District was enlarged by the addition of several Townships lying to the South and West.

These have been carefully inspected by the Medical Officer and Sanitary Inspector, and their several defects noted.

In Norton-le-Clay two wells were found to be polluted owing to their vicinity to foldyard, but the two sources of watersupply actually in use in the village were pure and good.

In Kirby Hill the two public draw wells were found to be impure, and in one of them the well top was dangerous, and there was no proper apparatus for drawing the water.

Both wells ought certainly to be covered and supplied with pumps, as the present difficulty in obtaining water must have most unsanitary consequences. The wells are reported to have been cleaned out since the inspection, but while that may effect a temporary improvement in quality it does not meet the objection in regard to the difficulty in obtaining quantity.

In Louthorpe the wellwater was found to be impure owing apparently, in part at least, to the sinking of the surrounding ground







surface. This matter has been attended to, and the water when examined subsequently to the repairs, was found to be markedly improved in character.

In South Otterington the waters from 3 wells required to be examined, one of which was evidently much contaminated; The supposed cause being the defective condition of the adjacent road drain. This was remedied, but an examination of the affected water sometime after the repairs had been executed showed the water to be worse than before.

It is now reported that the landlord intends to sink a new well at some distance from the site of the old one.

In the early part of the year, a watersupply obtained from a spout in the side of a hill in Dalton Village was complained of, as it was supposed to have suffered from some field drainage operations in the vicinity.

There appears to be some doubt as to the right of the villagers to the use of the water at all, but at any rate it was twice examined, once during frost and again after a thaw, and at both times it proved to be exceptionally pure, but containing an amount of lime salts which pointed to the probability of some deep spring having been tapped.

In Lessay a watersupply, being suspected, was examined but found to be pure.

In St James's Green Thirsk a well supplying two cottages, was complained of and found to be impure. The introduction of the Town's Water-supply was advised and carried out.







During the year it was reported to the Authority that in the matter of house drains there were still many dwellings in which the waste pipe from the Kitchen Sink appeared to be in direct connection with the common drain.

In a large number of cases the waste pipe has now been disconnected or closed altogether. The matter is continuing under observation and the work of conversion is still going on.

In presenting my Report to the District Council under its new Constitution, it is fitting that the Sanitary requirements of its most populous centres in Thirsk and Sowerby, should be formally brought under its observation.

The overfilled and imperfectly emptied ashpit nuisance, remains at the root of a main branch of sanitary trouble, and it is unlikely that it will ever be effectually removed, until as has often been said before, the business is brought under the direct supervision of the Council itself.

It has been suggested that a few prosecutions might quicken the sense of cleanliness among the tenants of the more insanitary quarters; but to prosecute those who are practically helpless would verge on the tyrannical, be productive of much irritation, and would very quickly be dropped, leaving the grievance in as unsatisfactory a condition as before.

In the Summary of the action of the Sanitary Inspector during the Year, he reports that,  
 56 Ashpits have been thoroughly cleaned out  
 56 Privies thoroughly cleaned out  
 30 Middens and accumulation of offensive  
 Matter removed







25 Private Drains have been attended to.

15 Township Drains have been attended to.

22 Watersupplies been attended to.

Cases of fever attended to supplied with disinfectants and where necessary have been stoved and fumigated.

16 Slopstones (unsanitary) have been attended to.

Signed

John M. Buchanan M.D.

Medical Officer of Health.

Thurs. 25<sup>th</sup> January 1896



